THE ONCE AND FUTURE QUEEN - Issue 1 R16 Lettering Pass
Written by Adam P. Knave & D.J. Kirkbride
Drawn & Colored by Nick Brokenshire
Lettered by Frank Cvetkovic
Edited by Hannah Means-Shannon & Shantel LaRocque

PAGE ONE

NICK – Please light this page and the next a little harshly. Noir-ish shadows and the like. They're leaving for a flight from Portland to the UK just before dawn. Outside can be all shadow with random harsh shafts of light. Inside the house, the same. Airport can be that cold fluorescent institutional light - -with shafts of dawn break (there's ref you'll see the windows) basically Pages one and two should be lit like a horror movie, all hard lines and cold light. Mundane on the surface with horror lurking below and in the shadows, unbeknownst to our characters. Shadows should occasionally have nefarious shapes that our characters don't notice, but eagle-eyed readers will.

1/
Close up on a female hand (DURGA Rani's mom, not Rani – so a 40-something hand instead of an 19-year-old one), with a letter opener the shape of a sword (cool, but not the same hilt as Excalibur). It's ripping open a plain envelope.

1 CAPTION (non-narrative location): Portland, Oregon, USA.

2 DURGA: Why would you seal the boarding passes in an envelope?

2/
Pull back. Durga, in elegantly flowing but loose fitting, colorful clothes and WILLIAM (Rani's dad) are next to each other in the living room. WILLIAM is wearing gray suit pants with a and a white dress shirt, no tie or jacket – but also big metal belt-buckle that kind of stands out from the rest of the ensemble. His glasses are on top of his head. Rani is to one side, trying to close a suitcase.

3 WILLIAM: So we wouldn't lose them. Now, where are my glasses?

4 RANI: On your head. Can you help me close this, Dad?

5 WILLIAM: You can't **FIT** that many books, Rani, unless your carryon's bigger on the inside.

3/
We're outside now. Durga is already in the driver's seat of the car (On the right!). Hand on the horn. William is closing the trunk. Rani is on her cellphone (remember she's left-handed). On a nearby wall is a Fae Shadow, don't draw attention to it, but yeah. We need to see it. (They live around here and I apologize for the gigantic link:
https://www.google.com/maps/place/Excalibur+Books+%26+Comics/@45.5133192,-122.6415178,3a,75y,123.14h,86.04t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1sxdBux31d9EgsP4YJbxv69g!2e0!6s

%2F%2Fgeo3.ggpht.com%2Fcbk%3Fpanoid%3DxdBux31d9EgsP4YJbxv69g%26output%3Dthumbnail%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26thumb%3D2%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D139.25259%26pitch%3D0!7i13312!8i6656!4m5!3m4!1s0x5495a09a3a4a4e37:0x31f28dcbe9c096e6!8m2!3d45.5119244!4d-122.6406446!6m1!1e1 just so you know what the area needs to look like. Set back from Hawthorne by a few blocks, up in the 20s somewhere.) This will have to pin down the page and possibly lay under over panels, to show the neighborhood.

6 RANI (into phone): That's cold. You need to forgive him before--

7 WILLIAM: All right, there we--

8 SFX: HHHONK

9 DURGA: The Arturus family train needs to be **MOVING**!

4/
They're turning onto Hawthorne. We should be able to see, out a window, EXCLAIBUR COMICS (I mean how can we not use them. I've talked to Debbie there and gotten the ok to use their sign: https://s3-media1.fl.yelpcdn.com/bphoto/jnmGHxl6BWb2JRXXhK9uzw/ls.jpg) - while the car turns it almost hits a bike! On the bike is Lance, though we haven't met him yet. It's a near miss. This panel will be like 3. If they can split the page and then 1/2 and 5 can sit on top it MIGHT work, Nick but yeah big scene sets.

10 LANCE: Hey-o! Watch it!

11 WILLIAM: Damn! Next time we cab!

5/
We're in the airport now! (Here's the new carpet, yes it matters - I don't think we can use it EXACT legally but - http://res.cloudinary.com/sagacity/image/upload/c_crop,h_654,w_719,x_0,y_0/c_scale,w_640/v1396727807/1213_New_PDX_Carpet_Design_evfp8s.png) Note the design of the airport near security (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9f/Portland_International_Airport_security_check.jpg). It's pretty. Let's use it. And add another Fae shadow somewhere, maybe part of it fading out in a shaft of light. ANYWAY! Durga is being walked one way to be searched. William is fumbling with his giant belt buckle. Rani is through security, putting her boots back on.

12 RANI (muttering to herself): Yeah, I feel **REALLY** secure now.

PAGE TWO

NICK - Remember, harsh plane lighting, we're still doing the horror movie sort of lighting for this page.

1/
The Arturus's are boarding the plane. William first. We just see Durga and Rani partly, behind him as he talks to a stewardess.

1 WILLIAM 1: Sorry! Sorry!

2 STEWARDESS: We were just about to close the--

3 WILLIAM 2: Yes, of course, sorry.

2/
They're sitting in a row together. Rani has the window. William has the middle. Durga has the aisle. Durga is fishing some pills out of her bag. William is talking to Rani. Rani is pulling a red notebook out of her bag, and a set of headphones.

4 RANI (small to herself) 1: I hate flying.

5 WILLIAM: You'll love Cornwall, Rani! It's **GORGEOUS**. When I was a kid--

6 RANI 2: Sounds great, but I need to study.

3/
Durga is looking around, trying to find a stewardess, one hand cupped as she holds pills (we don't need to SEE the pills just, yeah). William and Rani continue to talk, though her headphones are already on.

7 DURGA: May I have some water?

8 WILLIAM: The air is so clean! I mean, Portland's is too, but--

9 RANI: Studying, Dad.

4/
We can see Rani making notes in her notebook while she listens to music. Out her window is just sky and clouds. The notes are hand drawn chessboards with unreadable scrawl markings. Her parents are out of the shot.

10 CAPTION (Rani): If the Queen's Gambit works, maybe I can pivot to a Torre Attack--but Diallo loves an Alekhine's Defense to open…

SFX (small, from Rani's headphones) (NOTE - music lyrics so FRANK maybe some music notes etc. it's just noise bleed from her headphones): When they kick at your front door, how you gonna come?

5/
Durga and William talk. We pan away from Rani for a moment.

11 DURGA 1: These pills aren't working, William.

12 WILLIAM: Durga, love, give it a bit. We've twelve hours yet.

13 DURGA 2: Reminding me of that doesn't help.

Commented [SL1]: I'm suggesting this change just to open up a little more room in the panel for these three balloons.

PAGE THREE

1/
Inset est. shot of a building, nothing fancy Nick but a place one might hold a Chess Tournament in England. You know, those English Chess Houses we hear so much about… heh. Anyway, est. shot of it. A banner on it "CHESS TOURNAMENT TODAY" maybe?

1 CAPTION (non-narrative location): Cornwall, England.

2/
We're at the chess tournament! The lighting should be warmer Nick; this is Rani's calm place. She's at a table near the stands, so we can see the stands near her. In the stands we should see her parents and also GWEN. And if you can slide a fae Shadow somewhere, that'd be great. Rani doesn't smile as the boy across the table from her, a wiry kid with a big shock of blonde hair, is tipping over his King. A judge stands near the table, watching.

2 JUDGE: Match to Rani Arturus.

3 RANI 1: Good game, Robinson. You almost had me.

4 ROBINSON: How'd you reverse the defense?

5 RANI 2: Trade secret.

3/
Rani is at the same table, a different kid across from her. This opponent is a heavy set, black male, dead serious, named Kalu Diallo. We can still the crowd but the focus should be Gwen in them.

6 CAPTION (Rani) 1: You got this, Arturus. Just stop looking at that **GIRL**.
7 CAPTION (Rani) 2: Who'd **WANT** to stop, though? Damn it, focus! I can take him.

4/
Small inset. Gwen smiles at Rani.

8 CAPTION (Rani): Whoa. **SHE** just smiled at **ME**.

5/
Rani is blushing. She is setting down a Rook.

9 CAPTION (Rani): I can still save this. **FOCUS**! Christ. Stop mooning over someone you'll never see again.

6/
Kalu smiles, very cocky, as he moves his queen. Rani looks embarrassed, and shocked. The same judge is nearby.

10 KALU: Heh.

11 JUDGE: Match to Kalu Diallo.

12 RANI: I…good match, Diallo.

13 KALU: Almost had me, Rani. **ALMOST**.

7/
Side shot as Rani looks into the crowd. Her parent's faces are blank, trying to not show how they feel; we need to sell that first. But more importantly, Gwen is gone.

14 CAPTION (RANI) 1: You blew it, Arturus. The whole trip **WASTED**. Day one!
15 CAPTION (RANI) 2: Gotta get out of here before I scream.

PAGE FOUR

1/
Back at the hotel. Rani is pacing back and forth. Her mom and dad are both talking to her.

1 WILLIAM: No one wins every match.

2 DURGA: You were doing so well, though--then you seemed to just **FORGET** where you were.

2/
Rani is still pacing, so she's in a different spot in the room, now with her hand against her forehead, looking upset while her parents continue.

3 WILLIAM: Now Durga, with the time zones and--

4 DURGA: Is that it, Rani? Honey, you're allowed to lose, but this seemed **DIFFERENT**. We just want to understand.

5 RANI: Mom.

3/
Rani has sat on the floor, cross-legged. Her parents are still talking.

6 WILLIAM: The trip isn't a waste, though. We can sightsee now, go to Kelly Rounds!

7 DURGA: That's true. Rani, let's have a nice dinner. We can discuss this later.

8 RANI: Can we not, instead?

4/
Rani is on the floor, staring at her hands, sad face. William in leaning down some into the panel to talk.

9 RANI: I know I lost, all right? An expensive, travel to England **LOSS**.

10 WILLIAM: No, no, sweetheart, you--

5/
Rani is up again, heading for the door, headphones in hand, grabbing her jacket. William is where he was, which means he isn't visible now, only Rani and Durga.

11 RANI 1: I just need some time.

12 DURGA: Rani…

13 RANI 2: <u>ALONE.</u>

6/
The hotel room door closes; Rani's parents are left alone.

14 WILLIAM: She'll be fine. Back soon I'm sure.

15 DURGA: Stop being so calm and--and British. I worry she takes this all too **SERIOUSLY**.

PAGE FIVE

1/
Rani walks along a cliff face in Cornwall. She has her headphones on. The sun is setting. There's a Fae Shadow lurking, of course. Let's have it nice and big and pretty! Nice sized est. shot really.

1 CAPTION (William dialog carryover): "Reminds me of a certain American I married."

2 CAPTION (Rani): Dad wasn't wrong; this place is **BEAUTIFUL**. Feels like home instantly.

3 SFX (from headphones) (FRANK: More music lyrics): They're piling in the backseat / They're generating steam heat!

4 CAPTION (Rani) 2: That girl. I mean yeah, she was pretty--but I'd swear I've **SEEN** her before. With…longer hair maybe? A dress? Oh, who cares, Arturus?
5 CAPTION (Rani) 3: Never seen her before, won't again. Need to stop blaming her for blowing it.

2/
Rani walks along the cliff face, hands deep in her pockets as the sun continues to set.

6 CAPTION (Rani) 1: I let myself get distracted.
7 CAPTION (Rani) 2: It was **MY** fault.

3/
Rani stares off into the setting sun, facing away from us, her back to the steep hill she is just in front of. We can't see the hill has a drop off, of course, not yet, but it's there.

8 CAPTION (Rani) 1: Maybe I just hit the wall. Maybe chess isn't **EVERYTHING**.
9 CAPTION (Rani) 2: Shit, if it that's true, what else do I **HAVE**?

4/
She takes a step back, now on the very edge of the hill, still facing the sun.

10 CAPTION (Rani): Am I even qualified for anything else? Not that chess is a **JOB**, but…

5/ - 6/
Rani has taken another step back, her back leg in space, as she steps onto nothingness behind her.

11 CAPTION (Rani): …without chess, I don't even know.

12 RANI: What the--?!

PAGE SIX

Here's Rani's tumble down the hill Nick! Have fun with it, we'll add "Oofs" and "acks" and SFX to fit. Pratfall-ish but it should also look like it might hurt. Things fall out of her pocket: her music player can go flying out of it, her headphones go askew, a pen and small notebook (for strategy and whatnot) falls out of her inside coat pocket, her jacket flips over her head, as if blinding her. Make everything about her belongings feel specific. She just doesn’t buy things and leave them as is, she tweaks everything to suit her better.

PAGE SEVEN

1/
Rani is at the bottom of the hill. There should be a few Fae Shadows out of her line of sight if possible. We're at dusk now, the sun mostly set. Rani is on the ground, knee of her jeans torn. She's dusty and scuffed. Reaching out for her fallen items.

1 RANI: That's about right for today. **OW**.

2/
Rani has stood up, and is putting things back in her pockets. Fists full of items, heading for pockets.

2 RANI 1: At least no one saw that.
3 RANI 2: Ugh. Getting back up this hill is gonna suuuuuck.

3/
We pull back a bit and see the glowing cave! Rani is looking at it now, too.

4 CAPTION (Rani): Maybe whoever's in there can help.
5 CAPTION (Rani): Stranger in a strange cave in a strange land. What could go wrong?

4/
Rani starts to walk toward the cave.

6 RANI: Hello? Sorry to disturb your, uh, spelunking or whatever…

5/
She is now half in the cave; we're still looking from the outside of it.

7 CAPTION (Rani): What's in here? I **NEED** to know..

PAGE EIGHT

1/
Dusk, same time, Gwen is walking along a path, the hill that Rani fell down is above her, and she is literally taking the lower road. The hill will be around a bend in the road she is coming up on. She’s not watching where she walks, doodling instead in a notebook as she walks.

1 CAPTION (Gwen)1: Ol’ Dad, he’d say, "Really, Gwen? Another crush?"
2 CAPTION (Gwen) 2: Blah blah blah.

2/
We see over Gwen's shoulder. She's doodled Rani's face, and chess pieces all over the page. She's in the process of drawing a Rook.

3 CAPTION (Gwen) 1: What are these castle-y things even called? Towers?
4 CAPTION (Gwen) 2: **Oh**! I should hit the Tower tonight for a beer. Good idea.

3/
Gwen looks up as she starts to take the turn in the road.

5 CAPTION (Gwen) 1: Yup. Gonna have a pint or three…after I work out where I am.
6 CAPTION (Gwen) 2: Smoooooth. The book of "Wee lost Gwen" Chapter Whatever I'm Up To.

4/
She spots Rani walking into the cave.

5/
She looks on at Rani in the distance.

7 GWEN: Is that…?
8 CAPTION (Gwen): It’s **HER**!

PAGE NINE

1/
Rani stands in the entrance of the cave. The source of the glow is EXCALIBUR, in the stone. It's in the foreground, Rani's curious face looking at it and toward the reader. The hilt is normal looking. It's the focus here, the glow, the possible menace, the possibility.

1 CAPTION (Rani): Sword. Stone. Really? Must be a tourist trap.

2/ - 3/
Rani reaches for it…

2 RANI (caption across panels, between the action): Nice trick, but I bet it's rigged so no one can pull--

3/
Big page centerpiece! Rani pulls the sword with her **left hand**! (Something to always remember. It'll make her sword fighting a little different/awkward to her opponents, too.) The hilt is now the Queen Hilt. Armor is on her jacket sleeve! She's FLOATING and glowing with the light the sword was glowing with! Around her float faces of Fae, shadowy faces of Gwen and Lance we can't quite make out, but they're Old Timey Arthurian Style versions of themselves, etc.

SFX (voices haunting and thin, reedy sounds from the past and future each sentence it's own line and balloon):

3/ The betrayal…

4/ Step aside, you scheming **BITCH**!

5/ …but I love you…

6/ The Lady **ALWAYS PLANS**, sire.

4/
Inset: Gwen's head is peeking around the mouth of the cave, eyes wide. She's terrified and jaw agape.

PAGE TEN

1/
Rani is on the ground again, glow fading. But now a soft green glow surrounds MERLIN. He's looking like a pulp SF astronaut. Bubble helmet and all. Inside the helmet his hair almost hides his pointed ears.

1 MERLIN 1: It's about **TIME**.
2 MERLIN 2: Heh, everything's all about time, though. No, other, hm…other meaning. Wait…

2/
Outside, so we can still see the entrance to the cave Gwen turns, running off the other way.

3 CAPTION (Gwen) 1: Nope. Maybe. **NOPE!** Gotta get my prescription adjusted, or…no, I feel fine, but that…
4 CAPTION (Gwen) 2: …what the bloody hell **WAS** that?

3/
Back inside the cave. Rani and Merlin look each other over. The Sword is still in Rani's hand. Fae Shadows head for the mouth of the cave.

5 RANI 1: What the hell was that all about? And who the **HELL** are **YOU**?

6 MERLIN 1: The hell I am Merlin.

7 RANI 2: Like the **WIZARD**?

8 MERLIN 2: Not "like." **THE** wizard Merlin. And as for what that was about, you did what you needed to do.

4/
Rani pinches the bridge of her nose with her free hand, utterly overwhelmed and confused.

9 RANI: Wait, ugh…Why are you dressed like a spaceman?

10 MERLIN 1: Am I? Ah, yes, you'd expect the robes and the, ah, pointy hat.
11 MERLIN 2: I'm working my way back through time, you see, and time, well, it's like an onion.

5/
Merlin laughs. Rani still looks like she has a headache, the glow fully faded around her now.

12 RANI (off): It stinks and makes you cry?

13 MERLIN 1: Heh, sometimes. When it drags or you run out of it, but--no, hm, what I'm saying is that time is **LAYERED**. Not linear so you see, uh, space--spaceman.

14 MERLIN 2: What happened then happens now, and the future has already happened. It's all, well, **LAYERED**.

6/
Rani sits on the Stone that held the sword. Merlin looks on. (Need to make sure Rani's balloon is above Merlin's so it's read first.)

15 RANI: This…

16 MERLIN: Is a lot to accept, but you are the Arthur foretold, the once and future…**QUEEN**, yes? You will unite the world.

7/
Rani looks down at the sword. Merlin has his arms half crossed, one hand up, head tilted.

17 RANI: This is **INSANE**! I can't--I mean, I just turned nineteen…

18 MERLIN 1: Hm, so you're a little **OLD**? Everyone in his or her own time.
19 MERLIN 2 (small, mumbling): Well, hm, maybe not **ALWAYS**, but **NOW** at least.

PAGE ELEVEN

1/
We're in Fae! Fae are running down a hill, racing each other toward a big castle! Blacklight colors. Scary in its brightness, not the expected dank shadows of the villains' land. There are three of them: BELSUBUS is squat and has a floppy hat, JERONE is medium height but ripped and has both arms wrapped in bandages, and ADREEN is slender and the tallest of the three.

1 CAPTION (non-narration location): Deathflower Mountain, The Fae Lands.

2 BELSUBUS: It's time! It's **TIME**!

3 JERONE: I shall tell the King first!

4 ADREEN: Never, scumchild! 'Tis **MY** news to deliver!

2/
They race through the open gates of the castle! Fae Three is falling behind!

5 JERONE: Ha ha ha! The news is mine to tell! **MY** reward will be **GRAND**!

6 ADREEN: Scumchiiiillllld!

7 BELSUBUS: It's time! It's time!

3/
Fae Two kneels in front of the throne upon which the King in Shadow sits. Fae One and Fae Three are still entering the throne room.

8 JERONE: Oh mighty King in Shadow! The seals are broken! The--

9 ADREEN: The **SWORD** is **CLAIMED**!

10 BELSUBUS: It's time! **IT'S TIME!**

4/
We get our first good view of the King in Shadow. He sits on this throne, hand resting on the pommel of his sword. He seems to cast shadows the way the sun casts light, but he himself is pale as the new moon.

11 KING IN SHADOW 1: Ready the **DOOM SCOUTS**. Call forth the armies!
12 KING IN SHADOW 2: All time is one time, and our time is **NIGH**. They free us--they release us. And we shall thank them--
13 KING IN SHADOW 3: With fire and blood. With broken bones and shattered hopes. **PROPER THANKS** indeed.

PAGE TWELVE

1/
Back to the cave with Rani and Merlin! They are looking at an image of what we think of as King Arthur and Knights and all, projected on the cave wall by Merlin's magic. It'll be an image, surrounded by Rune Magic, Nick, as we discussed his magic should look. So Runes around his hand, maybe his helmet even, and the image itself.

1 CAPTION (Non-narration location): Cornwall, England.

2 RANI: Now **THAT'S** King Arthur. All regal. Also a man.

3 MERLIN 1: True, but Rani Arturus--a portentous name indeed--this King Arthur was a fraud to serve the needs of a fractured country.
4 MERLIN 2: Good fellow, decent handshake--but, well, a **FAKE**.

2/
Rani looks at the sword. The image on the wall is fading.

5 RANI 1: Even if I believe you about King Arthur, I'm still no **QUEEN**--and I can't carry this big ass sword around all day!

6 MERLIN: There can be **WISDOM** in a leap of **FAITH**. Arthur did what he needed to, but he never wielded Excalibur. You do. And it isn't a sword.

7 RANI 2: No, it is. See, in my hand. A sword.

3/
Merlin chuckles, eyes glowing softly. We're shifting angles gently so he can talk first.

8 MERLIN 1: One clearly too big for you to lift, yet you **DO**. Excalibur is an idea. A **SYMBOL**.
9 **MERLIN 2 (small):** You lot just respond to the phallical nature of, well, hm...swords.
10 MERLIN 3: Consider it in a different form.

11 RANI: What, you mean like if it was a water buffalo, or--

4/
Rani holds the sword up between them, fixated on it.

12 MERLIN: Think more inconspicuous and less **ALIVE**, perhaps?

13 RANI: Like a picture or--a tattoo…?

5/

Rani's hand is empty! There are light trails (with glyphs) from her hand arcing up to her arm - that is how the sword moves basically. She looks shocked! Merlin grins at her.

14 MERLIN: Tattoo! Yes, hm. That works.

15 RANI: My arm itches…

6/
Rani pulls up her right jacket sleeve, she's shoved them up to her elbow. On her inner forearm is a tattoo of the sword.

16 MERLIN 1: Now you understand, yes? This is **REAL**, my Queen.

17 RANI: Noooo way. This is too…right, that's it. I'm outta here. This'll wash off or I have a concussion or both.

18 MERLIN 2: Return to your parents, but consider what I've said, hm? **FEEL** it. Soon you will need to **ACCEPT** it.

19 CAPTION (Rani): Thing is, I do accept it already. Doubt's fading. But **WHY**?

PAGE THIRTEEN

1/
Back at the hotel. It's late night. Rani is fiddling with her door key in the hallway. Focus on the doorknob and key fumbling.

1 CAPTION (Rani) 1: Jingle jangle quietly.
2 CAPTION (Rani) 2: Why did we luck into the last hotel with actual keys?

2/
From inside the room, she opens it, looking sneaky. We see shapes in the dark, some natural, one fae that only a few readers will notice.

3/
Light by one of the full-sized beds switches on! Durga is up with her arms crossed. William is a little disheveled.

3 SFX: click

4 WILLIAM: Wha--? I'm up. I'm up!

5 DURGA: Do you know what time it is, young lady? We tried calling your cell!

4/
Rani has her hands up, defensively, cell phone in one hand, knowing she's been busted—play up the teenager "uh oh" comedy. Only Rani is in this panel, it's hers.

6 RANI: Mom, Dad, I **KNOW** it's way late, and we're in another country, and, yeah, I had my ringer off, but, look, something **HAPPENED**.

5/
Her parents go from angry to concerned. William is up, now totally awake, putting glasses on with his right hand, reaching out with his left while Durga is throwing her blankets off to stand, too. Rani is just out of the shot.

7 WILLIAM: Happened? What happened? Are you all right?

8 DURGA: I'll call the police!

6/
Rani has bared her tattoo and it is already glowing strongly, glyphs forming!

9 RANI: No, no, it's just, see…

7/

The sword is in Rani's hand now! Some trails from it as it has grown from the tattoo. Again just Rani here, no parents in frame.

10 RANI: Apparently I’m the Queen of England or something?

PAGE FOURTEEN

1/
It's very early morning at Heathrow. Gwen is rushing through the hustle and bustle, hastily packed duffle bag slung over her shoulder.

1 CAPTION (non-narrative): The next morning…

2 CAPTION (Gwen): What'm I even doing?

2/
She's at the ticket kiosk, waiting for a ticket to print out. She doesn't notice the Arturus family in the background, also scrambling.

3 CAPTION (Gwen) 1: As soon as I close my eyes, "Portland." Can't get it outta my mind. What's in Portland? No, it's **WHO**.
4 CAPTION (Gwen) 2: Or is it "whom"?

5 GWEN: Blimey.

3/
Rani is trying to keep up with her parents. They all seem a little frazzled.

6 RANI: Why do we have to cut the trip short? Maybe we should go talk to Merlin--

7 WILLIAM: It's the **PRESSURE**. School, chess--we just wanted to help you succeed--

8 DURGA: Pressure didn't make that sword magically appear! My skin crawls just thinking about…

4/
Gwen heads in a different direction as we see William shushing Durga, paranoid.

9 WILLIAM (small, background): Shh! Don't mention the "ordsway."

5/
Gwen is at the airport bar, a half empty pint of dark beer in front of her.

10 CAPTION (Gwen) 1: Yes, it's a wee bit early in the morning for a pint.
11 CAPTION (Gwen) 2: But I'm also flying to Portland on a hunch, so…

6/
She takes a swig.

12 GWEN 1: What're you doin'?
13 GWEN 2: Even for wee lost Gwen **THIS**--this is above and beyond.

PAGE FIFTEEN

1/ - 3
A tiny triptych across the top, with panel breaks between. A plane taking off. A plane landing. Three small figures at the front door, walking in.

4/
Back in Portland. Rani is in the kitchen, mindlessly washing dishes trying to think, but her parents are still talking it all to death around her, without her paying attention.

1 CAPTION (non-narrative location): Portland**,** Oregon, USA.

2 WILLIAM: …but it's all just legend, yeah? We're too calm. If this were real we'd be **PANICKED**.

3 DURGA: We both saw the **MAGIC** sword! And we…we are. Panicked, I mean. I can feel that. Sort of.

4 CAPTION (Rani): Are they calmly freaking out? Maybe totally losing it. Why'd I show them?

5 RANI: I need alone time.

5/
She ends up in a park, sitting with a chessboard on the bench playing both sides.

6 CAPTION (non-narrative): Soon…

7 CAPTION (Rani) 1: Nice chessboard. Whatever. Lets me think. And hey, they did ask me to not find any **OTHER** mystical objects.
8 CAPTION (Rani) 2: My parents taking this too calmly. We all are. Why'd I leave Merlin? Did **HE** do this?

6/
As Rani touches the White King, Gwen suddenly sits down next to her. All we see in this panel is Gwen's hands on the board. We're focused on the hands here as Rani is touching the King and Gwen's hands are on the board.

9 CAPTION (RANI): Good question. Did the fake spaceman hallucination do…oh!

10 GWEN (off-panel): Right. Hello, then.

7/
Gwen is trying to look reassuring, but Rani is still very startled and a little weirded out.

11 RANI: **YOU!** What're you--?

12 GWEN 1: I decided to take holiday in Portland.
13 GWEN 2: No? Okay, look, I had to--I was **COMPELLED** to see you. I'm terrified but also…fine with it?

8/
Gwen leans in, and Rani doesn't recoil.

14 GWEN 1: After…you, the cave…lights and, who even knows!

15 RANI: You **SAW** all that?

16 GWEN 2: Yeah, and it--what time is it? Is it the middle of my night? Can we get food while we talk?

PAGE SIXTEEN

1/
Interior of Lance's messy bedroom. Close up on an alarm clock blaring at 12:00 PM.

1 SFX: bleet bleet

2/
Inset. Lance's hand slams the top of it.

2 SFX: slam

LANCE (off-panel, weakly): uuuhhhh…

3/
Cut back to reveal Lance turned back over in bed. He's in shorts and a tee shirt. He's clutching sheets, trying to curl up back to sleep. Clothes and technical journals and books are everywhere.

3 LANCE: More sleep, please.

4/
He sits up with a start. We can see his bike and helmet, same from page one.

4 LANCE: Can't be late.

5/
He gets out of bed suddenly, moving with purpose again.

5 CAPTION (Lance):. **NOT** today for some reason.

6/
He starts searching for clothes, suddenly frantic. He's worried he'll be late, but can't pin down why. He hates his job. And yet…

7/
Pants over shoulder, shirt hanging off head, finds one black sock.

6 CAPTION (Lance): GO with it, Lance.

PAGE SEVENTEEN

1/
Gwen and Rani are seated at a table for two in the middle of a busy diner-type restaurant. Give the look and locals some fun, Portland character. Unnoticed weirdness in the shadow here and there. In this shot, no real attention drawn to her, is Morgan Pari, famous author. Her shadow isn't quite the right shape.

1 RANI: You just **GOT** a ticket as soon as you were home?

2 GWEN: I told you--**COMPELLED**. Don't you, I dunno, **FEEL** something?

2/
Lance walks up to them, in his waiter clothes. (Could just be regular clothes, or maybe just jeans and a tee shirt or polo with the restaurant name on it.) He's all business, but Rani recognizes him. Gwen looks sly.

3 LANCE: Hello, ladies. I see…**YOU**?

4 RANI: I, yeah, me, why, oh-- Lance? Right?

5 GWEN: Oooh, you two know each other?

3/
He softens as he recognizes her, and she introduces him to Gwen. Sparks are subtle but everywhere. Can we soften the lighting too here a bit? This is the first time the future Round Table are together, it's a key moment they can look back on.

6 LANCE 1: Yeah! Rani, high school--and your mom almost ran me over a few days ago.

7 RANI: That was you? Yikes. Oh, sorry, this is Gwen.

8 GWEN: Hi there.

4/
We pull back and they are small figures as we show the table Morgan is at. As the small talk continues, Rani is then distracted by Morgan! She's her favorite author—at least was. YA is for kids, uh, right. Yeah.

9 LANCE: So, how do you two--?

10 RANI: Holy shit, is that Morgan Pari in that corner booth?

11 GWEN: Who where?

5/

Back to our three. Lance smiles at her excitement. Gwen says Rani should introduce herself, but Rani's shy.

12 LANCE: Only the most famous children's author there is, right, Rani?

13 RANI: Well, YA, which is **<u>DIFFERENT</u>**, I mean, I started reading her in junior high.

6/
Gwen puts her hand on Rani's, casually yet intimately. It's natural. Lance notices this.

14 GWEN: You should introduce yourself.

15 RANI: No. Should I? No, I couldn't…

PAGE EIGHTEEN

1/
Cut to the topic of their conversation. Morgan is writing in a regular notebook, her laptop unopened on the table next to her coffee mug. Ever since wi fi, this just has less distractions. She's focused on her work, seriously concentrating.

1 RANI (off-panel): "…she's looks busy."

2/
As she concentrates on her writing, the coffee starts to levitate out of her mug.

3/
She turns her eyes to it as it takes on the form of a Fae warrior. Morgan squints. She's concerned.

2 MORGAN (small): Damn it all.

4/
Morgan hastily grabs her stuff, startled. Her shadow makes no sense. It's a broken reflection of her both human AND fae at once. A weird shape eagle-eyed readers will catch and others will pass over.

5/
She runs out, Lance calling after her to get her to pay.

3 LANCE: Hey, Ms. Pari, you forgot to pay!

6/
As he laments the lost wages… Rani comments on it being Morgan, but Gwen is wondering why it's suddenly gotten noticeably colder, hugging herself. We can see people's breath now as they talk.

4 LANCE: Did your favorite writer just dine and dash?

5 GWEN: Is it getting chilly in here all the sudden?

7/
A small fracture of light appears over Morgan's table…

6 SFX: ptzz

8/
Some folks notice, but none more than our heroes, who all know something is amiss. They're small but they are standing facing danger while others start to move away from it, basically.

9/

Rani touches her right arm instinctually. Close on her arm and hand. We know what's about to happen.

PAGE NINETEEN

1/
From the crack step four Fae warriors! They're looking for something or someone! The Four Fae are: ADREEN (from before) with a hooked sword, GRUMHO with an axe, with a badly chipped blade, SNARTI with a short sword, and LUMT with a hooked sword. All different body types and variations in dress, but of the same species.

1 LUMT: Ugh, the stench of **HOOMAN**!

2 ADREEN: Spread out! Find the female!

2/
Rani starts to materialize the sword, light and glyphs starting to trail from her amour to her empty hand. She is assuming they have come for her and is grim.

3 RANI: Everyone get back!

3/
Rani has leapt to her feet, Excalibur in hand to the amazement of everyone else within the shot! Don't forget lines of light and glyphs from her arm to the sword in her hand.

4 LANCE: What the--?

5 GWEN: THERE it is!

4/
The four Fae turn to her. Grumho licks his axe while Snarti spits on the ground. Adreen blocks his eyes from the sun and Lumt points, grinning!

6 ADREEN: **THE SWORD**!

7 LUMT: The fleshling, she has it!

5/
Just centered on our guys. Aww yeah! Rain steps forward, sword raised. Gwen grins behind her, steak knife in hand. Lance is just shocked.

8 GWEN 1: Come and get it, freaks.

9 RANI: Gwen, what are you **DOING**?

10 GWEN 2: Startin’ a fight, wot!

6/

A profile shot, the fae on the left, and our trio on the right! Gwen and Rani will face off with Grumho and Lumt respectively! Lance caught off guard, not sure what to do as Adreen stomps toward him, and Snarti stands back to help whichever group needs it.

11 LANCE: What is **<u>HAPPENING</u>**?!

<u>PAGE TWENTY</u>

1/
Big fighting fun as our heroes team up and the patrons run and cower, being saved and whatnot. Rani instinctively blocks Lumt's swing!

1 RANI: Ut!

2 SFX: <u>KLANG</u>

3 LUMT: grrrr!

2/
Rani knows how to wield her sword better than makes sense and is a born leader. She doesn't hesitate!

4 LUMT: ooph!

5 RANI: Grraah!

3/
She glances at the sword once mid-fight.

6 CAPTION (RANI): Whoa. Is it **<u>ME</u>** or the **<u>SWORD</u>** fighting?

4/
Gwen is a brawler as if she were in a bar fight, not smooth or getting much done honestly.

7 GWEN: Take **<u>THAT</u>**, ugly!

8 GRUMHO: ooph!

5/
Lance fights awkwardly, having to duck a lot. He isn't a coward, mind you, just lost in his fight giant melee!

9 LANCE: <u>WHAT THE</u> <u>HELL IS GOING ON???</u>

6/
Rani knocks Ardeen away from Lance.

10 RANI: Get to cover!

11 GWEN: Look at you **<u>GO</u>**, Rani!

<u>7/</u>

Gwen turns and grabs Snarti by the throat.

12 SNARTI: urk!

13 GWEN: Nuh-uh!

8/
All three of our new heroes fighting!

14 LANCE: I'm not hiding while you two save me!

15 GWEN: That's the **SPIRIT**!

9/
Lance looks over Rani's shoulder.

16 RANI: This isn't a **GAME**!

PAGE TWENTY-ONE

1/
Rani knocks down Adreen, giving him the chance to yield!

1 RANI: Stay **DOWN!**

2/
Gwen, in the heat of battle, throws a bottle at his Adreen!

2 GWEN: Hoof!

3/
The bottle breaks on his face and blood comes from one of his eyes, where the bottle hit! (We'll see one-eye Adreen again)

3 SFX: smash

4 ADREEN: Eeeyaaaah!

4/
The Fae snarl!

5 LUMT: Hooman meatsacks! We'll **CRUNCH** your bones and **DRINK** your blood!

6 SNARTI: Eat your livers and **DANCE** on your graves!

5/
The trio of heroes backs up, together, Rani to the front, with Gwen itching to move forward, and Lance ok with being NOT in front honestly. Lower, natural angle.

7 LANCE (small): You'll what to our what?

8 RANI: Why…**WHO** are you, even?

9 GWEN: Trolls.

6/
Lumt is insulted.

10 LUMT: TROLLS?! How dare you! We're **FAE**!

7/
Gwen pushes Rani aside and clocks him.

11 GWEN: Tough talk!

12 RANI: Gwen!

13 SFX: <u>**POW**</u>

14 LUMT: umph!

PAGE TWENTY-TWO

1/
Three shot of our heroes again. Rani and Gwen recover but Rani looks mad. Lance stands nearby, wide-eyed.

1 RANI: Damn it, Gwen, they're after **ME**--and I have a **SWORD**.

2 GWEN: Then use it, or give it over. I don't even know why I'm here! Or them! Or--

3 LANCE: Or anything! **WHAT'S GOING ON?!?**

2/
Big panel of the fight about to resume, from above. Carnage, broken furniture, our heroes not working together, Fae angry. And off to one side, small but so we can see him (and out of line of sight of everyone else, though he can see them) Merlin.

4 FAE: The day shall be **OURS**!
We'll **SPILL** yer **GUTS**!
Then we'll feast upon the rest of the **HOOMAN INFESTATION**!

5 RANI: Over my dead body!

6 LANCE: Don't give them **IDEAS**!

7 GWEN: It's already on their agenda, mate.

3/
Merlin watches, sad.

8 MERLIN 1: This is how it begins. Prophesy and the past and future all tangled as history begins in blood and, hm, yes, anger.
9 MERLIN 2: But can we unweave the strands, and prevent it?
10 MERLIN 3: Can **THEY**?

TO BE CONTINUED!